

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHDM #0793/01 2181001
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 061001Z AUG 07
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 0511
INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE 7007
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3973

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 000793

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/05/2017
TAGS: [AMGT](#) [EAGR](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#) [OTRA](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE GRANTED FOR FIVE USG PERSONNEL
AND MR. THOMAS MEEK TO TRAVEL TO DAMASCUS TO ATTEND THE
BORDER SECURITY WORKING GROUP FROM AUGUST 8-9

REF: BAGHDAD 02601

Classified By: CDA Michael Corbin. Reason 1.4 (b) & (d).

11. Embassy Damascus welcomes and grants Country Clearance for the proposed visit of Ms. Karen H. Sasahara, Mr. Stephen Mangino, Colonel Cheryl Smart, Mr. Daniel F. Landers, Mr. Brian Gilligan and Mr. Thomas Meek. Travelers will be met and assisted at the airport by an Embassy driver, expediter, control officer Ms. Stacey Jones, Charge d'Affairs Michael Corbin and a member of the Defense Attache Office.

12. Control Officer and point of contact for this visit is Ms. Stacey Jones, Economic Officer, who can be reached at work: (963-11) 3391-3910; cell (963-(11) 0933-302-143; home: (963)-(11) 371-3279; or Embassy fax number: (963)-(11) 3391-4687.

13. Action Request: Each visitor must bring a copy of travel orders or provide fiscal data to cover the costs of the visit. Costs include, but are not limited to, American and FSN overtime, border crossing fees, field travel by Embassy employees, transportation costs for official vehicles, long-distance telephone calls, equipment rentals, representational events, and other costs directly attributable to the visit. Upon requesting hotel reservations, visitors should provide a credit card number to guarantee the reservations and must let post know at least 24 hours in advance of any amendment or cancellation of the reservations to avoid personal credit card charges. Any hotel cancellations will be billed to the travelers.

14. Security Requirements: Please provide level of security clearance via immediate cable or by email. Post cannot allow access to the chancery compound or to the controlled access area without official notification of clearance level. Diplomatic passports and government identity cards do not guarantee that the bearer has an appropriate security clearance.

15. Lodging: Single, non-smoking rooms have been reserved for each member of the delegation at the Four Seasons Hotel for the nights of August 7, 8, and 9. Confirmation numbers are 196401/2/3/4/5. The hotel phone number is: 963-(11) 339-1000 and the fax number is 963-(11) 339-1099. The room rate is USD 110.00 plus 10 percent service, plus 11 percent tax per night. This is within per diem but does not include breakfast. The Four Seasons Hotel does accept major credit cards.

16. Communications Support: Long-distance telephone calls (for official business only) can be placed from the Embassy if the traveler provides a fund cite or has authorization

from the appropriate agency or section head at Post. The internet can be accessed through a stand-alone PC in the Embassy on a first-come, first-served basis. The internet can also be accessed from hotels in Damascus by dialing to one of three different ISP's in Syria. There are also several internet "cafes" in Damascus.

¶7. Currency Exchange: The Embassy Class B cashier provides accommodation exchange from dollars to Syrian pounds at the current rate for institutions, against cash, traveler's checks and, with the authorization of the financial management officer, personal checks. Cashier hours are Sunday - Thursday, 10:00 - 13:00, closed Tuesday. Travelers should minimize the amount of Syrian pounds exchanged because reverse accommodation is not authorized on the local economy. Limited reverse accommodation exchange is available at the embassy cashier for official visitors during normal cashier hours. Travelers may also purchase pounds at hotels, private banks, and branches of the Commercial Bank of Syria.

¶8. Photography: Photography of individuals in uniform (including police), government buildings, and military installations is strictly forbidden.

¶9. Health: Health facilities in Damascus are not up to U.S. or European standards, and facilities outside Damascus are extremely limited. Only personnel covered under the State Department's medical program and with a valid medical clearance for Syria are eligible for medevac at USG cost. It is recommended that all other travelers have medical evacuation insurance sufficient to cover evacuation by chartered air ambulance, or ensure that their agency will cover the cost.

¶10. Threat Assessment: Political developments and security in the Middle East sometimes change quickly. The Embassy was attacked, without warning, in September 2006, by a small group of terrorists using automatic gunfire and grenades. They attempted, unsuccessfully, to detonate a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device at the rear gate. One local guard was seriously injured and there was at least one Syrian fatality in addition to the killing of the four attackers. Since the attack, the Embassy has taken additional measures to improve its security posture. In February 2005, the former Prime Minister of Lebanon was assassinated in Beirut, prompting the U.S. to recall its Ambassador to Syria for consultations. There are no plans to assign a replacement, reflecting the ongoing difficulties in U.S.-Syrian relations. Government-sanctioned demonstrations have occasionally included expressions of anti-American or anti-Western sentiment. Violent mobs attacked three Scandinavian embassies in February 2006. In general, Americans in Syria should vary their schedules, avoid large crowds and gatherings, and report suspicious incidents to the Regional Security Officer. They should also avoid electronic financial transactions and should not carry valuables or large amounts of cash in crowded shopping districts. Visitors should also read and follow the guidance in the latest public announcements and State Department travel advisories for Syria.

CORBIN